

2001-Eckhart-Tolle-Even-The-Sun-will-die-interview-with-Danish-journalist

[Speaker 2] (0:11 - 2:01)

Sounds True and Namaste Publishing present Even the Sun Will Die, an interview with Eckhart Tolle. My name is Tammy Simon, and I'm the publisher of Sounds True. In the summer of 2001, I was promised the opportunity to interview Eckhart Tolle later in the year, when I would be traveling in the Vancouver area where he lives.

I wanted to meet and talk with this unusual man of German descent who had reported in his book *The Power of Now* to have experienced at age 29 a sudden, spontaneous, radical spiritual awakening. Our interview together was scheduled for September 11th. Early that morning, like many people across North America, I awoke to a phone call from a friend, alerting me to the unbelievable sequence of events that had occurred that morning.

I called Eckhart's office, expecting our interview to be postponed. But no, Eckhart was poised and perfectly prepared for our interview to occur as scheduled. What follows is the audio record of our time together.

The first part was recorded on the morning of September 11th, and the second part a few days later. Here's *Even the Sun Will Die* with Eckhart Tolle. So this morning, Eckhart, the World Trade Center crumbled before the eyes of the world.

What is your reaction to that event?

[Speaker 1] (2:13 - 51:04)

I could feel a sadness and a compassion with the suffering that thousands of people are going through right now. I was not amazed because I know that the collective insanity that is in the human mind still has a grip on the world. And I know this is not the last extreme manifestation of the collective insanity that has dominated the whole of human history.

It becomes so obvious when we see such a violent manifestation of it. But if you look at the history of the 20th century, a lot of it is a history of madness, of suffering inflicted by humans on themselves, on others. Unnecessary, mostly.

So everywhere you look, I always tell people, if you doubt the insanity, which one could look at as a sickness, not blaming anybody, it's not anybody's personal deficiency, personal identity to be insane. It is an expression, a manifestation of the human condition as it has been ever since we recorded history and probably before that. It is not the last manifestation of that insanity.

Although there is something arising in the collective consciousness of the planet that is different, that is new, that is not part of that insanity. I sometimes call it a new state of consciousness is arising. It does not mean that the enormous momentum behind the insanity has come to an end yet.

So I'm sometimes asked by people, when I say something new is arising, a new state of consciousness is arising now on this planet, they ask me, are you really sure? Is the world really getting better? Because when we watch the news on TV and see what's happening, it very often looks as if the opposite were true.

So are things getting better or are things getting worse? And the answer is both. There is an acceleration both of the new energy that's coming in and there's also an intensification and an acceleration of the old, which is still playing itself out and refuses to let go.

And this is the collective manifestation of it, and you can often see on a personal level and the level of the individual the same applies. I know many people in whom a new consciousness is arising, enormous presence is arising, the old mind patterns don't seem to operate anymore, the old reactive patterns, the compulsive mental noise, identification with that compulsive mental noise that gives you a sense of self, identification with mind, all that which is part of the insanity is subsiding. Something new is arising in the individuals, and then suddenly it happens that a wave of the old consciousness, identification with mind, reactivity, loss of witnessing presence, suddenly comes back.

So I know many people who go through these waves, they almost live in two worlds for a while, they're very present, very conscious, and get taken over by the old again, the old consciousness, sometimes with more force, it seems, than before, as if the old consciousness were saying, I'm still here and I'm not going. And so for many people it's only when they experience the effects of human insanity in their own life as suffering, inflicted by situations, by circumstances, or inflicted on themselves by their own mind, their own emotional body, for many people it's only through that, through the effects, through experiencing the effects of the insanity, when there's nothing personal in it, that the openness comes about, the realization that came to me when I couldn't stand the suffering anymore, the continuous depression and anxiety that I lived with for years, that strange thought that came to me that said, I can't live with myself any longer. And then I looked at that thought and said, what is that self that I cannot live with? Who am I?

Who is that I? Who is the self that is so heavy and so unbearable and so insane, so much so that I can't live with it anymore? And at that moment the separation happened of that ultimately mad, fictitious sense of self and a deeper sense of presence or beingness.

So that me, whether it operates on a personal level or on a collective level, is the root of the insanity. It's a sense of self based on mind, on the conditioned mind, on thought

structures, on mental images. And when it operates on a collective level, the me may become an us against them.

Now, whether it operates on a personal or collective level, the me cannot live without enemies. It creates its own enemies because its survival depends on a sense of separateness, a contraction. And it needs to perpetuate the sense of separateness.

It can only do that by creating enemies. And then once you've done that, you've created an enormous screen between yourself and the other, a mental screen of conceptualization of images. And then it's easy to kill because you can no longer sense what you're doing.

The other becomes a mind object. You no longer know, in the words of Christ, they know not what they do. It's a totally unconscious movement.

So humans are trapped in that and acting it out. The world wars. Look at what Germany did.

The collective egoic sense of self created through nationalism. It's the height of insanity and you see it so clearly, but it operates the same way on a personal level. Germany made the whole world into an enemy in the Second World War.

And that is the egoic pattern. And then they could feel so strongly, now we know who we are. They don't, of course, they only have a fiction in the mind, but it gives you the illusion that now you have a stronger sense of self.

And for a while that feels good, but really you're creating suffering, ultimately for yourself, and you're inflicting suffering on others. And so that is the core of the madness. And to dissolve it, it cannot be dissolved as a collective movement.

The collective follows. It can only be dissolved, that sickness, whatever you want to call it, the insanity, can only be dissolved in the individual. Because the collective is only the sum total.

If there's unconsciousness in the collective energy field, as a religion, a nation, a tribe, a company, whatever it may be, the collective is only the sum total of the unconsciousness in the individual. So if there are strong egoic collective patterns operating, in other words, madness on a collective level, it is only because the madness operates in every individual. But it is a little bit more difficult to see it in the individual, and the most difficult to see it in oneself.

So there you see the insanity reflected as human history. You see the insanity when you watch it on the TV, and especially at times like today. To see the root of it, and above all, to see the root of it in oneself, whenever one is identified with an image, with mind, it begins with identification with the continuous stream of thinking, which creates a sense

of me based on mind activity, a conceptual sense of self.

The moment you get trapped, and it's almost every human's destiny to go through that, to get trapped in that. Society does it to you, and it's an inherited mind pattern. In Buddhism, it's almost the central teaching, you could say, beautifully summarized by a Buddhist monk who was once asked, could you define the essence of Buddhism?

And they expected a long-learned answer, and the monk, the spiritual master said, yes, it's simple, no self, no problem. One could also say, no self, no suffering. And there's a strange statement by Jesus, I feel, by the way, that the teaching of Jesus has come to us in fragments, so we have to look and see what are those fragments pointing to, what are those pointers, they're very powerful pointers.

There's a statement by Jesus, deny thyself. It's been misinterpreted, they didn't understand it, but it's probably also even a mistranslation, but he may have said something like dissolve the self. So how do we do it?

It seems like a task. Can I change my own state of consciousness? And so you have created another big problem.

You could fall back into the same problematic sense of self, and now you add something to the already very heavy and problematic sense of self that says, I need to get out of this state of consciousness, I need to reach a new state of consciousness. How do I get there? Another problem.

This is often the problem for spiritual people. They see something and it becomes a desirable state to be achieved at some point in the future. And the need to achieve something in the future lies at the core of the mind-made sense of self.

The insufficiency, the sense of lack, all that, is at the core of the mind-made sense of self. So many spiritual people fall into the trap of then striving towards some mentally created ideal sense of self or perfection. That's the trap of spirituality, of not realizing that the transformation of consciousness that is at the essence of the religions and the original teachings, those founders of those ancient religions, I call them early flowers of humanity, early openings, very early.

And then a few others came, some we know of, some we've probably never heard of. Now for the first time there's the possibility of more than a few isolated flowers opening, a flowering of human consciousness on a much larger scale. So they all pointed to that possibility of that transformation of consciousness.

Now the human mind looked at it and said, that sounds very good. And it made it into a distant object to be achieved in the future. But if you look at all the original teachings, there's an emphasis on here and now, on now, on the present moment, as the key, the entry point into that state of consciousness.

Now that's been covered up by all kinds of mind stuff, belief structures, future, time. Almost every religion gives you time to achieve, to become, and misses the essence which says time won't get you there. You cannot get out of that old state of consciousness by adding time, by giving yourself more time, or even by adding content to your mind through further experiences, through further knowledge, through maybe all kinds of spiritual experiences.

Experiences, whether spiritual or otherwise, doesn't matter. But this need to add more before I can be myself. And of course, I'm not saying there's anything wrong with acquiring knowledge.

I'm not saying there's anything wrong with having new experiences. That is one aspect of our existence here in form, is to, yes, to investigate, to explore, and all these things require time. To explore something requires time.

To learn a new skill, it requires time. To absorb new knowledge requires time. To become good at something requires time.

At future, on that level, I'm not denying there's nothing wrong with it. It's fine. It operates beautifully.

But there's something more vital that most humans miss, although in a deeper sense they're all looking for it, and that is knowing who you are beyond the form in which you appear, whether the physical form or the mind form, the mentally created me, knowing who you are beyond that. And that is the one vital thing in everybody's lives. It's the one thing that matters, as Jesus puts it when he speaks to Martha and Mary in the parable.

There's one thing that matters absolutely. Everything else matters relatively. We're not denying this phenomenal existence or running away from it or no longer interacting with it.

You can't even run away from it. You are part of it. We're not denying it.

But we are seeing that, yes, all that has its place, and yet all that, whatever you can experience, the knowledge you can inquire, the experiences you have, whatever you can add to yourself, is relatively important. Whether you have enough money in the bank to live comfortably, whether you lose all your money and have nothing anymore, yes, it's relatively important, but not absolutely important. Only one thing is absolutely important, knowing who you are beyond form, beyond mind, beyond concepts.

And that's the one thing that time cannot give you, that future cannot give you, that cannot be acquired through adding something to yourself. Nothing wrong with adding, but finding yourself, no, through adding something. So to see that the adding to oneself is beautiful, it's fine, but knowing yourself, you don't need to add anything.

And it is often for people who have gone through this transformation, as it seems almost accidentally, it happened to them, and in almost every case, perhaps every case, you will see it didn't happen to them when things were added to them, so they got more and more and became greater and bigger. No, it happened to them when things were taken away, content was removed. Whether external things that were important to them, possessions, social functions, status in society, relationships, people close to them, or inner things, mental beliefs suddenly crumbled.

In other words, whether content, whether physical content, external content, or mental content, was taken away from them. And then those people who accidentally, so to speak, went through this transformation of consciousness, suddenly something happened. And now, later when they speak about it, that is often colored by the language that they use, which is according to whatever culture they live in, whether they say Buddha nature suddenly emerged, I knew myself, my essence as Buddha, whether they say Christ consciousness, I knew my essence as Christ, whether they say I knew myself as pure consciousness, whatever words, or they might not even have any words to say anything about it, but something happened that the Buddha calls the end of suffering, not because something was added, there was not an enhanced sense of self, there was a diminished sense of self through loss, through suffering.

And then it happened. So that is the case when it happens to humans accidentally, so suffering, although suffering, and this is a beautiful paradox, a large part of human suffering is inflicted by the madness, and yet it's the very suffering, in many cases inflicted by the collective mental illness, that drives you to the point of collapse, when suffering reaches a state of acuteness or intensity, and often it happens through great loss. So every disaster, whether on a personal level or on a collective level, it looks dreadful, and from that point of view it is dreadful, every disaster is also an opening into something far deeper.

It's an opening, as if something was suddenly opening up, and there's a dimension that before was covered up by the forms. Often disaster means the forms dissolve. It can happen when something collapses, it's a very obvious thing, a form dissolves, but it can happen inside a person's head, when thought forms dissolve, identification with the mental images of me dissolve, firmly held beliefs dissolve, and you no longer know on the level of mind who you are.

Suddenly all explanations don't make sense anymore. And so there's great loss, and yet that loss, one could almost say it's as if a hole were appearing in the fabric of existence suddenly. And of course the fabric of physical existence is very fragile, the hole could appear at any moment in everybody's life, and suddenly there's this, it's painful, but that is the hole where something, I rarely use the word God, because it's been misused so much, one could say God shines through whenever a form dissolves, whenever that hole appears in the fabric of your existence, and sooner or later the hole will appear in

everybody's fabric, no matter how comfortably their life is arranged right now, they may have a nice job and a family and a pension plan, and yet at any moment the hole could appear, and it will appear, you will die, the body will dissolve, people around you will die, the forms will dissolve, they're destined to dissolve.

So this can be the source of great suffering, but potentially it's a great opening. So the beautiful paradox is that the very madness is also inseparable from liberation from the madness, because it's the suffering that's caused by the madness that takes you to that point of liberation. When you encounter the effects of the madness, whether on a collective or personal level, encounter them in an acute form, and so things often dissolve violently around you.

And so here we have that lesson, when loss appears in your life, not to resist it, and loss will appear, it must appear. When something gets taken away, something is removed from you, not to resist that movement. So there's a, with that acceptance, acceptance of whatever it is, whatever the is-ness of this moment may present, not to resist it.

It is. Becoming friendly with is. That means, that simple thing means you're stepping out of thousands of years of old mind patterns which are never friendly with what is.

They need something else. They think they need something else. I need to find myself in the future.

And becoming friendly with what is is a spiritual practice. Some people don't become friendly with what is until what is, the suchness of this moment, becomes so painful and so unbearable that suddenly all resistance to it collapses. There's the state of surrender.

And that is really the essence of all spirituality, is the state of yes to what is. Some people are driven to it through the intensity of suffering. Others encounter intensity of suffering and never find the yes.

They remain trapped in a no. In other words, it's a descent into hell. At some point, they will wake up out of it.

The beauty of spiritual teaching is that you don't need to wait for disaster before you can enter the state of yes to realize the yes begins at this very moment. And if you cannot fully say yes to what is at this moment, internally, to simply align yourself with whatever appears in this now. After all, that's all there ever is.

There's only the now ever in your life. If you're not aligned with this now, that's all there ever is in your life, then you're not aligned with life. And the egoic sense of self, the little me, is not aligned with life.

It says, no, no, I want something else. So it's not open to the enormous possibilities that are in the now, possibilities both of spiritual realization, even possibilities in terms of

helpful things happening to you on the phenomenal level of life giving you what you need at that moment. Even on that level, it works.

So how do we step out of these many thousands of years of mind pattern of mental illness? Simply by stepping out of the stream of mind and time into the newness of this moment. You wake up into the now.

And that's why I said you don't need for this one thing that matters, knowing who you are beyond form, beyond the story in the head that gives most people their sense of who they are. My this, my that, my experiences, my relationships, my... Let me tell you my story.

That's me. And needing to revive it continuously. And of course it hasn't completed itself, so needing desperately the future, because my story hasn't quite developed the way it should have.

This is everybody's story. But people don't know that. I think it's just my story that hasn't gone the way it should have gone.

But there's still the possibility that my story may work out. They never really work out for that long because you can't look for yourself in a mental story, the story of me. No story ends with a happy wedding or honeymoon.

It goes on. Old films, they are cut when there's a wedding to keep alive the illusion that the story can complete you, that you can find yourself in it. So to honor the story, yes.

To give it its due, yes. Not to neglect what I need to do on the level of my external existence, but not looking for who I am in the story of me. I'm beyond a storyline.

So stepping out of that, you're not losing your memory. No, it's simply you're no longer identifying with the content of your mind. And that unconscious compulsion to add further content, which is only there because you're looking for yourself in content and you're not complete yet.

You'll never be complete if you look for yourself in the content as experiences, knowledge, ideas, more relationships, whatever. That is really the energy behind what the Buddha calls, when he says what's at the root of all this human suffering, he calls it, is desire or craving or thirst, whatever way you want to translate what he said. That desire, desire is a relatively weak word, so it's better the craving, the wanting, the needing, that comes about because you're looking for yourself in the realm of content.

Whether it's just sense experience, add more sense experience to me, consume something, whether it's on the level of eating or sexuality or whatever, there's nothing wrong with any of these. Only if you start looking for yourself there, then it becomes this enormous craving behind it, enormous impulse and unconscious thirst, desire, craving,

wanting, needing. Ultimately, it's not the object that you really want, whether it's the food or whether it's sex or whether it's the experience or whether it's the knowledge, whatever it is, that you're looking for on the level of content, the new car, whatever.

It's not really that what you're looking for. You're looking for yourself, and that is a desperate search for who I am. That's the root of all this desperate craving and wanting.

It runs our whole civilization. If people no longer had this desperate craving and wanting, it would collapse. So they're looking for themselves, even all the compulsions.

Ultimately, if you go to the root of it all, they're looking for themselves. And that in itself is not bad. It's beautiful that they're looking for themselves.

They're looking for where they cannot find themselves. It's true. But if they look for long enough where they cannot find themselves, they will realize something.

And so many humans have reached that point now. They have been looking a long time, for generations and generations and generations. They have been trapped in that movement.

So suddenly comes the realization, no, this is not it. I have achieved that. I have added that to me.

And still the craving is there. The needing is there. The sense of lack is there.

The fear is there. And then comes the realization, no, this is not where I am. And suddenly an openness comes to spiritual truth.

And they're able to listen. And sometimes all that's needed is just one little pointer. In many cases of people who are really ready, they hear one statement, one word, one pointer.

Oh, my God. And suddenly something new opens up. The world of the fictitious self loses its hold over you.

So the main thing is we are not making this transformation of consciousness that is happening into a goal to be achieved, as if you could add it to yourself. And many spiritual people who see themselves as spiritual and already see the unimportance ultimately of whatever they achieve or could add to themselves on an external level, they already see that, but they're still trapped in the mind pattern of needing to add something to themselves spiritually. And some get stuck in that then for 10, 20, 30 years.

And they're looking. They have some nice experience, yes, but they come and go. And some build a new, improved sense of self on the basis of the good experiences they have had.

Or they've become good meditators and so can enter good states of consciousness. Nothing wrong with that. But again, those mind structures can be very cunning.

They can come back through the back door. When you've recognized the fallacy already on one level, they come in through the back door, and you're trapped again and not getting there. I'm not enlightened yet.

You're looking for a state, and all that's happening is the state is already there. You are already in your fullness now, but it's obscured. It's obscured by more desire, by needing more future, needing mind structures, mental movement.

So the beauty of it is you don't need to bring about the new state of consciousness. You could only mess it up. All that's needed is allowing it to be there.

And how do you do that? Simply by allowing this moment to be as it is. That's the suchness of now, all there ever is.

And the now takes on many forms. It's always now. Forms appear in it.

Forms may dissolve. It's always now. So to align yourself with now, to become aware of now.

This is interesting. When I talk about now, people say they think the now is what happens, but what happens changes continuously. What appears in your life changes continuously.

That's why people believe there are many moments in one's life. There are many moments in one day. There are many moments in an hour.

But it's not really true, because it's always the now moment. Nothing can be that is not now. Nothing can happen that is not now.

So it's always really the one now moment. This one, this. So there are not many nows.

There's only one now. But the now is not a thing. You can't really make it into an object.

The danger when one speaks about it, it becomes another mind object. But the now is, one could say, a spaciousness in which the whole of phenomenal existence unfolds in that vast spaciousness. And when you allow to unfold whatever is unfolding in this now through the yes, the inner yes, the yes comes because you have recognized the futility, the absurdity, ultimately the madness of no, an inner no to what is.

To be in a fighting attitude towards life continuously. You've seen that is suffering. And so when you see the madness of living in this inner no, and it's normal, most people don't see it because it's so normal.

They've lived with it always. But when you see it, then the yes, the possibility of living in the yes comes. The inner yes to what is.

And then the strange thing is you go beyond whatever form arises in this moment. Yes, it's short-lived. It comes, it goes in the field of now.

When you say no, you react to whatever form arises. Now, the form could be a situation at this moment, something that happens at this moment, a person that comes into this moment, an emotion that comes into this moment, whatever comes into this moment. If you say no to it, you react to a form that comes.

If it's an emotion, it's an emotional form. A thought may come, thought form, external forms, a person, an event, a breakdown, this, that, some form. And if there's a no to it, to a form that arises, that no strengthens your own form identity, the form of me.

With every no comes an inner contraction. And the contraction makes your form identity stronger, the me. And so that is what keeps you trapped in the illusory sense of self.

It needs the no. It hates the yes. Because it loses its form, the yes is open, the openness comes.

Through the no, the contraction is there. So there is the fear that I will lose myself if I say yes to what is. Mostly unconscious, but some people actually say it, they have this fear.

If I say yes, who am I? So a miracle happens when the yes comes, you no longer react to the form, an arising form. The arising form is allowed to be.

You're no longer a reactive entity. Now what is there when the reactive entity is no longer operating? Who are you if you're not the reactive entity, the me, that needs its problems and its difficulties and its enemies?

Because if it doesn't have them, it can't react anymore. It doesn't know itself anymore. What happens if the reactive me doesn't operate anymore?

Who are you? Now, if I continue to speak, this is dangerous because language is form. I'm pointing to the formless essence of who you are.

So I will continue to speak, but we need to know now whatever I say now is form, it only points, it's not it. Any word that I use is not it, it's only a pointer beyond itself. So who are you when the form identity, the me, is no longer operating and it stops when you enter the state of yes?

One could say there's suddenly a sense of spaciousness, there's a sense of space in which things happen. So you are aware suddenly not only of what happens, you're aware of a spaciousness and this is only a pointer, a field of spaciousness in which it happens. One could almost say a field of peace that is around events, people, whatever it may be,

that field is there.

That's the essence of who you are beyond form. That's also the deepest meaning of what we call the now, the present moment, because ultimately at the deepest level that is what the now is. So at the deepest level you are the now, this moment in which it all happens.

And then the beautiful thing is that whatever happens is no longer threatening. The world of form loses its power to intimidate you, but it also loses its promise to fulfill you. So suddenly both fear, which is the threat of the world, what the world can do to you, the world of form, fear dissolves and desire, because desire is looking for yourself, as we talked about earlier, in that world of forms, content.

Then you may still have superficial desires. You might say, oh, I'd love to eat a piece of cake. It's fine.

But there's no longer that craving behind it because you're not looking for yourself in it anymore. And if you get what you desire, there's not much energy charge in your desires then anymore. It's fine if you get it.

It's fine if you don't. So the world loses its power to make you fearful. It loses also its promise to fulfill you.

In other words, you become free of the world. Again, the world of form, all phenomenal existence, because you know yourself as the spaciousness in which all forms come and go. That's only a word.

You can use other words if they are more helpful. The awareness, the conscious, the pure consciousness in which it happens. You are that.

And it's not something you can make into a concept or an image. And from the point of view of the mind, which operates only through concepts and image-making, you no longer know who you are. And the egoic sense of self doesn't like that because it wants to be bigger and more of me, know myself totally.

But from the point of view of mind, you enter a state of not knowing. But that knowing is only not knowing from the point of view of conceptual knowledge. That is the field out of which all creativity arises.

One could say it's pure intelligence prior to form, pure intelligence itself before it becomes something, a thought or another form. So on the mind level, you no longer know who you are. And yet in that not knowing, there is a very deep sense of knowing, but not through concepts.

The strange thing also is when you dwell in that state, that spaciousness, whatever you

truly need to know at this moment and only this moment, will be there, will come. Not only what you need to know, whatever you need at this moment comes out of that because it's the ground of all life. One could say it is life itself prior to form.

All the rest is the forms of life. They come and go quickly. Some go very unexpectedly.

But no form lasts that long. Even the sun, which compared to human existence is eternal, has a lifespan. So again, if that's just a belief system, another belief, sometimes when people study ancient teachings, they study all forms are impermanent, which is a beautiful truth, of course, a powerful pointer, but it goes beyond belief.

It's comforting if you believe that all forms are impermanent. It gives a little bit of comfort, perhaps already a little bit of spaciousness, just even to recognize the limited nature of all forms and to see the truth of the Buddhist, the impermanence of forms, the temporary nature, the fleeting nature of forms, the fact that no matter how hard you look, you can never find yourself in any form. Beautiful truth, ancient Buddhist truth.

To deeply see it, it could become, yes, another idea in the head that can happen, but if you just use it as a pointer and you see the impermanence of all forms, how quickly they come and go, and not to resist it, to see it, that seeing itself, that recognition of all forms as temporary, passing, flux, that is already the arising of that spaciousness, presence, I sometimes call it, and even the seeing of it is liberating.

Just to see it, even if nothing ever was pointed out, as the Buddha taught in purely negative terms, that never gave you anything really to believe in, although the human mind always manages in the end to find belief systems, to see it is already the arising of the spaciousness, and that's the liberation that is available to you, here, now. It's right here, now. It's there when there is the seeing of the impermanent nature of all forms, and with it a yes, not a resistance, that demands that these forms should not go away, they should be permanent, or these are not the forms that should be appearing in this moment, this moment is not as it should be.

[Speaker 2] (51:07 - 51:34)

Eckhart, I'm imagining someone whose entire family was devastated somehow in the terrorist tragedies that happened today, and I'm imagining that person listening to what you're saying, and perhaps at one level not connecting with it, because they might feel so emotionally overwhelmed by a sense of loss.

[Speaker 4] (51:34 - 51:35)

Yes.

[Speaker 2] (51:35 - 51:42)

So my question would be, how do you address that person, someone who's immediately suffering from a grief or a tragedy?

[Speaker 1] (51:42 - 1:00:58)

Yes. So there's great pain. There will not be the possibility, probably on the external level, to accept that.

For most people, it will be impossible to accept on an external level, although I speak of the yes to what is. There are extreme cases of loss, disaster, or pain when it seems impossible to say yes to what is. And so when the yes is not there, pain is there, great suffering is there.

And the suffering, you can feel the suffering, in the very cells of the body. And the first step is actually to feel it in the cells of the body, not to deny it, but to feel that, the enormous suffering, which is human suffering. Millions of humans have experienced, millions, millions at all times disasters of that kind.

If you believe in reincarnation, and I'm not advocating either belief or non-belief, because what you believe doesn't matter, it doesn't contribute anything to the transformation of consciousness. It's not dependent on belief or disbelief in any idea. If you believe in reincarnation, then every human has already gone many times through that intensity of suffering.

If you don't believe in reincarnation, you can say millions of humans have already gone through that, because there's so much suffering. It's a human condition. And some humans encounter very acute suffering.

This is human suffering, and it's right here, now. When you feel it, it is an opportunity to accept the suffering, to say yes to what you feel. Not so much making it into mental stories, to feel it directly, to feel the feeling of suffering.

Oh, oh. And to cry, if necessary. Tears will come anyway.

And suffering will come in waves. It'll go away for a while, and a couple of hours later, there will be another wave of intense suffering. Whether you believe it or not, intense suffering of this kind is an enormous opening into spiritual realm in the deepest sense.

And allow it to be there. Allow the suffering to be there. Even, I've been talking about Buddhism, now I'm talking about Christianity.

The image of surrender to suffering is the image of Jesus on the cross. And this applies whether you see yourself as a Christian or not. It's an archetypal deep image that contains an enormous truth that perhaps people were not, for a long, long time, not able to hear consciously.

It could only be conveyed to them through that image. And that image of Jesus on the cross, we are used to the image. You may like it or dislike it.

It doesn't matter. But if you came to that image of Jesus on the cross without any preconceived ideas, you're coming from another planet and you see suddenly people worship this strange image of a man on a cross. And you would say, what is that?

Why do they worship this person who seems so completely helpless? And see, it's a mostly strange... If you come to that with a completely open state, you will see that it is an image of complete surrender to suffering.

And, of course, also in the story of the crucifixion, it's there as the last resistance of Jesus. And these are all archetypal images, archetypal teachings. The last resistance was, God, why hast thou forsaken me, Jesus says on the cross.

The last arising of resistance and suffering. And the next statement after that is not my will, but thy will be done. And that applies even if you have no belief in a personal God.

That is simply pointing to the state of complete surrender to what is, and it is the pain. Allow it to be there. You don't need to address a God if you don't believe in a God.

Simply allow it. What else can you do? There's nothing you can do, nothing.

Of course, you could train and start fighting them or go and become a terrorist in their country. It would be more deep unconsciousness. But truly, there's nothing you can do.

And to see that there's nothing you can do except allow this pain to be there. And then I'm not telling you or making any promise of what happens when you do that. You'll have to see for yourself what that allowing, what that surrender does.

That complete yes. And people have done it. Those who became teachers, the early teachers, somehow, perhaps through similar events, it happened to them.

Life did it to them. Dreadful, totally unacceptable disaster happened to them. Everything was removed from them.

And the pain became so unbearable that, of course, yes, they could have committed suicide. But really, a suicide is a deep no, still. It's an asserting of oneself against the world.

But instead, the suffering became so unbearable that they let go of the no. And even explanations in the head. You can't explain it, really, in the head.

Why, why, why, people ask. And the surrender only comes when you let go even of seeking an answer to why. You don't know.

It's not possible to know. So not even to seek an answer. And that is part of surrender because in complete spiritual surrender you embrace also the state of not knowing.

Accepting that there's deep pain and you have no answer. That's how it is. You just don't know.

And suddenly there's an openness. Suddenly there's some space around the pain. And the rest happens.

That's all really that is needed. I don't want to put ideas into your head and tell you what happens. Except to say that you will find some spaciousness in the midst of pain.

And there have been people in concentration camps, similar totally unacceptable situations that, you know, continuous intense suffering not knowing whether they would survive another hour, another day. Every moment could be the last. And suddenly a complete yes.

And suddenly they have reported, a few to whom it happened, a great sense of deep peace in the midst of hell. Peace in the midst of hell. That is the deepest teaching of the image of Christ on the cross.

Because ultimately every human is Christ on the cross.

[Speaker 2] (1:01:05 - 1:01:51)

Often, Eckhart, I've heard you talk about the new consciousness emerging and how this state is now available to more and more people. And honestly, I'm not convinced that this is not a projection of your experience. I have no doubt that you've flowered as a human.

But I don't see evidence around me of numbers and numbers of people. And I wonder if you're having some premonition that this is going to happen. Is it going to happen in five years, ten years, a thousand years?

Is there a timetable? Is there a number? And then, how will this actually transform the world?

[Speaker 1] (1:01:52 - 1:06:24)

Right. Now, admittedly, I seem to be at the epicenter of a wave of transformation because that is what I do. And people who come into contact with me, everybody I meet is going through a transformation.

And sometimes, when I switch on the television, I'm suddenly reminded, oh, it's not happening to everyone. So, because of my peculiar position, admittedly, it often seems to me as if the whole world were becoming transformed. And there's no denying that I

get huge amounts of correspondence from people who are reporting shifts in consciousness.

An enormous lessening of suffering, and so on. So I see that everywhere. I don't have a time scale.

All I know and sense is that there's an acceleration of something. I also know that it is unlikely that the planet would survive another hundred years if the old consciousness predominates for another hundred years on the planet with all that that entails. It is unlikely that nature, that the planet, would be able to endure that.

So for the first time in human history, that transformation has become a necessity even for the survival of the species. And perhaps it's only then, in any evolutionary transformation, perhaps it's only when a species reaches a critical point, when its survival is threatened, if it continues untransformed, that the transformation on a collective level happens. I believe, I would say, it is almost a fact that if the old patterns continue of doing things for another hundred years, and of course the patterns will become even more magnified, the means of destruction even greater, if they continue, the planet would not be able to sustain human life for another hundred years.

So we've reached for the first time in the history a point where it's no longer a luxury, the transformation of human consciousness, it was perhaps at the time that the Buddha was an early flowering, Jesus early flowering, already pointing to something. Perhaps they knew what was going to, they could already see the way it was going. So early pointers to that.

And then quite a few flowers after that, here and there. But it was never a necessity, humans, the planet survived even with human madness, but then came technology, then came science. Of course, yes, there are also manifestations of great intelligence, and yet, to a large extent, science and technology have also magnified the madness.

Before, people had a sword, you could kill a few people with a sword, and now you can kill hundreds of thousands with one device. There's no change, it's simply magnifying the effects of unconsciousness. And in a way, that's a good thing, because we see it more clearly than ever.

The first shock came to people in the First World War, which was the first war that was fought with enormous weapons of destruction provided by technology. And they were suddenly like, what have we done? Millions, millions of young men dying uselessly in trenches, and then they looked, and oh my God, that was an eye-opener into the madness, and that was only the beginning of the 20th century, and now we know what happened the rest of the 20th century.

It is in your face now, it's so obvious. So, I know that the work I do, for lack of a better

word, I don't feel it is work, is a manifestation of the new consciousness. Now, is enough of this coming through?

Are enough human beings going through this to save the planet? I don't know. Perhaps not.

[Speaker 2] (1:06:27 - 1:06:32)

So, is it fair to say that you're a kind of evolutionary mutant, in a way?

[Speaker 1] (1:06:32 - 1:07:12)

Yes. In a way, this really is what's happening, and it is almost like the species evolving into something new. Almost, to say, a new species evolving out of the old.

And again, not to make it into some kind of ego thing, or saying, we are the new species and you are not. That's more of the old. But yes, it is very much like a new species arising.

And it's arising because the old species is no longer capable of survival unless it changes.

[Speaker 2] (1:07:15 - 1:07:24)

And if you had to characterize the wiring or the characteristics of the new species, what would that be?

[Speaker 1] (1:07:26 - 1:11:35)

Well, the new species doesn't need enemies, drama, or conflict to give it a sense of identity. So it becomes free to a large extent of the conflict and the man-made suffering that is characteristic of the old consciousness. The Buddha had a very good perspective on it when he said, to describe the state of consciousness, of liberation, it is free of suffering.

You don't suffer anymore. There may still be pain, because pain to some extent is there as long as there is a physical body. You may have a toothache, or this or that.

Suffering as a psychological suffering that is caused by the me entity in the head, you no longer cause suffering to yourself through thought structures. And when you no longer cause suffering for yourself, you no longer cause suffering for others. Human interactions will be no longer governed by fear, as they are now, fear and desire, the two movements of the unconscious state.

But, and I use this word with great care, and rarely, because it's so precious, what it points to is so precious and really beyond words, human interactions will be governed by

love and compassion. And love is simply, not love is not saying I need you, don't you ever dare leave me, because I know what I'm going to do to you if you leave me. That's the love of the old consciousness, the so-called.

Love is simply to recognize the other as yourself. The recognition of oneness is love. And in all interactions, to recognize the other as yourself, no longer interact through making an image, a form identity of who that person is, because you've gone beyond form identity in yourself.

You're no longer constructing little traps and boxes and concepts for other people. And so love operates. We cannot even conceive what a world would look like if a large part of humans live in that new state of consciousness.

I don't speculate on that. One could. It's nice speculation.

It is certain that you would not recognize the human-made structures. They would be very, very different now. Potentially, this planet is a paradise.

It is still a paradise. Humans have tried their hardest to make it into hell. But it's still a very beautiful paradise.

And I'm not saying that the level of form does not have its limitations. Yes, forms still come and go. And yet, harmony is possible.

To live in harmony with the impermanent nature of all forms. To live in a state of love. Loving all forms, not as forms, but loving the essence of each form.

That the one life that manifests as millions of forms of life. But loving the one life of which the millions of forms are only temporary manifestations. Loving it as yourself.

Being it. That is the new state of consciousness.

[Speaker 2] (1:11:35 - 1:13:32)

This concludes Session 1 of Even the Sun Will Die with Eckhart Tolle. Our program continues with Session 2. Sounds True and Namaste Publishing present Session 2 of Even the Sun Will Die, an interview with Eckhart Tolle.

So Eckhart, because it is so rare for me to get to sit with somebody like yourself, what I'd like to do is ask you some questions about how your perception works. So specifically, after the experience of your awakening, how now do you experience sensory information? And how is it different from before?

Sounds, tastes?

[Speaker 1] (1:13:34 - 1:49:20)

That's a good question. After the kind of shift in consciousness happened, all I knew was that from one day to the next, suddenly everything was peaceful. All sense perceptions happened within a very peaceful field.

But I couldn't have said very much at that time except I was anxious, depressed for many years and now I'm at peace. I could have said that and I said it, but I don't know why. I also said that many times.

I don't understand it. I didn't understand it at all. I didn't realize at the time what had happened was that my thought processes had become reduced.

Whereas before, my mind was agitated, hyperactive, which is the case with many people these days. And to a large extent, my mind activity was self-torture and continuous projection into future, which of course generates more fear and anxiety. And then suddenly, from living with an agitated mind, to living with a very benign mind.

And I realized much later that the reason why there was that peace was that my thought processes had become reduced by about 80%. And since then and up to now, the way in which I perceive things, the world, nature, people, is still very much through stillness. In other words, while I perceive, there isn't a lot of mind activity that comments on what I'm perceiving.

There isn't a lot of labeling of sense perceptions. They're just there. Not a mental voice saying this, that, this, or a mental voice taking a standpoint in relation to what I'm perceiving, a personalized standpoint, my personal relationship to this what's happening around me at this moment.

And then that of course is the root of this incessant mind activity because there is a mind-generated me, a self, which personalizes every experience and interprets and judges and labels and conceptualizes every perception and makes it fit in to its mind-made sense of self and its story which makes up its identity. And all that is the continuous mental noise. So most people live trapped in the mental noise and what they perceive is they perceive as if they were looking through a very dense screen of words, images, concepts, in other words, mind activity.

And what happened to me after the shift then was that I had become reduced to very little. So a lot of the time when I walk around the city or drive or when I sit with someone looking at someone, listening to someone, or as I like to do sit in public places like cafes. I love to just sit and watch people.

I also of course feel very deeply about nature. To simply be there as an observing presence without the need to call anything or anybody anything. Just allow everything and every being to be as it is.

There's nothing I can add to it by interpreting it. Now, many people would not want to go

there because they are so identified with thought processes so they would think, well, the thought made me would think it would lose itself or lose something very valuable if it stopped interpreting, judging, labeling, because to the mind it seems when I stop all that I won't know anything anymore. I won't know what's going on anymore.

I need to know what's going on. So whenever people meet each other then there's immediately mental judgments come in and that's part of the labeling process and perhaps Jesus was referring to that when he said, judge not. All there's judging is it's mind activity, it's labeling.

And so it's such a relief to be able to be without that continuous interference and the amazing thing is that you do not become stupid or unconscious. In fact, you're much more awake in that state than you are in the state of identification with mental noise. So much so that one could almost say compared to that state of simply being present with what is without compulsively labeling, if you ever should need labels, they'll be there.

But when labels are not needed to a large extent, you're free or if labels should arise occasionally, they are recognized as mental labels and you don't necessarily believe in them or are identified with them so they don't contribute to any sense of self anymore. So it's not that you become unconscious or ignorant only from the point of view of the thinking mind which only knows thought, then yes, one could say that it's like becoming ignorant but only from the point of view of thought. So with this comes a wonderful realization there is a vast realm of consciousness beyond thought.

Thought is a tiny manifestation of a vast consciousness that is your essence and most people only know that tiny manifestation is not separate because consciousness embraces everything, is everything. Thought is only a particular form that consciousness takes so not to be trapped in that anymore, that tiny manifestation of consciousness, not that it will never operate again, no it can and does still operate but you're no longer trapped in it so it doesn't give you your sense of self anymore. It's not there in thought and all the emotions that accompany thought it's not there where you're seeking your identity or to enhance your identity through adding more content to your mind and so when that stops, oh suddenly you realize that you can simply be present here fully awake, alert and even know but not know through concepts or labels you just, you know without needing words, so there is a deeper knowing that can operate and does operate in that state in which thought activity can still happen when it's needed, in fact thought then becomes actually quite inspired insights, realizations, suddenly because they come out of that field of no thought when thought becomes trapped in itself, you go round and round and round and it's a continuous circle of largely useless and to a large extent destructive thinking psychologists found, even those who are not into anything spiritual they looked at thought processes and found that something like 98% of our thought processes are completely repetitive the same things go through the mind again and again and for many people what they thought 10 years ago, the same thoughts are still

going through their mind, conditioned totally identified with the conditioning of the mind, the conditioned mind, and so you see it in relationships where people act out their conditioning continuously you can see it with couples if you had recorded what they quarrel about 5 years ago, you could replay it, it's the same thing they're talking about and quarreling about now, just one example so that's to become free of the compulsion to label and ultimately to think so to realize that it is possible to be conscious without thought, to be awake without thought and compared to that state of wakefulness the state of identification with thought is like dream dream world, like being trapped in a dream, and that's the reason I believe why the word awakening and awake is so important, and has been for a long time in spiritual language Buddhism itself is about being awake Buddha, the root means the one of that word, it's not a name the root of Buddha means to be awake from Sanskrit so really Buddha rather than being a person, Buddha is the state of being awake, a kind of personification of the state of wakefulness, which means not identified with thought one could say, although all these words are never totally right, rising above thought, one could say the next step in evolution for humankind is to rise above thought, whereas up till now humans have been totally identified with thought that's the state of unconsciousness, complete unconsciousness so what happened then was the liberation, one could say from compulsive thinking, and from identification with thinking thinking still happens sometimes but ever since then no thought has made me unhappy and thought still occasionally happens, and of course when I speak thought is involved because thought is needed so that words can come out of my mouth but it is spoken from that deeper field of no thought, so then thought arises out of that and any creative activity and any creative insight that ever occurred to anyone in the world has come out of that field that is deeper or higher, whatever you want to call it, than thought and so it's that anybody who is creative in any way if only momentarily must have access to that field of no thought where suddenly there's a stillness but an alertness and then perhaps it only lasts a moment and yet suddenly there's a realization then it takes form as thought and that's fine but now it's thought that is actually empowered, it has a newness a freshness to it, it's not the old record thought mostly is the old record going round and round so any artist creates from that even if they don't know it, just as I didn't know when the shift happened that my thought processes had become reduced they just had become reduced and I knew I was at peace but I didn't know why so there are many creative people who don't quite realize that where their creativity comes from and that they enter that state of what I often call presence, which is thoughtless awareness they enter that state perhaps only briefly occasionally, but that's where that's where the treasures come from and then they are given form by the mind and then perhaps external form as writing or as music or as painting whatever form it takes or it may be that it takes on a completely different form that field, if you're in touch with that field it could simply be not go through with the mind, it can enter this world as an emanation of peace compassion or love so in that sense sacredness one could say is associated as an essential characteristic of that realm that is beyond thought peace sacredness, love in the true sense of the word, I don't like

to use that word so much because it's been misused but there's a sacredness to that field and that can those who are in touch with that for any length of time of course time only exists on the external level, in that field there is no time you're in touch with that, then also as long as you're in touch with that you emanate peace something shines through you one could say, something shines through the form there's an openness into a realm that is beyond form and so the way I now experience the world is through stillness mostly one could say everything happens in the field of stillness and even an agitation could happen around me and that also happens in the field of stillness it's liberation from the need to think and now perhaps before you ask another question maybe that is the question you're going to ask how does it happen? why did it happen to you?

can this happen to everybody? is it going to happen to everybody? or is there anything we can do to make it happen?

because there's not much point in just listening to something that happened to somebody else and think oh that's great but what about me? how could I? I couldn't get there but what I sense is that that state of becoming free of compulsive thinking is arising in many human beings already now it's not so much that they need to make it happen it's more like allowing it to happen and there are many humans who don't realize that already there are times when they are in that state of thoughtless awareness but it's not recognized because the mind cannot recognize it and because they're still perhaps 90% trapped in mind then it would simply seem like a moment of nothingness or it could if they go more deeply, it could be that they remember something as oh that was a wonderful moment but where is it now? sometimes people report in a moment of great danger they experience that shift when suddenly the mind stopped and they became enormously peaceful and they didn't know whether they would survive the next few seconds but suddenly there was that field of peace and they did survive, those who did and then they talked about it later and said that was very strange I was facing death and suddenly there was this peace and I could see whatever the situation was I could see the car coming towards me and I knew it wouldn't stop but I felt incredibly peaceful and alive and alert and present it can happen in those situations, it can happen in situations when for some reason the mind stops even sometimes through great physical exertion so much that suddenly the mind stops or overwhelmed by enormous beauty and for a moment there's simply an opening an opening and whenever you respond to beauty in nature for example or even the beauty of another human being a rose, a flower, a plant there's a moment for the recognition of beauty to be possible there's always a moment of thoughtless awareness and that's the moment when you truly perceive and for many people that moment is very short and then the mind comes in and interprets it but if they could pay more attention to that moment when there is actually the stillness it's only through perception in the stillness that you can be aware of beauty and so in that moment the beauty is there so the beauty and also this applies to

love, true love can only be there in the absence of mental noise now for many people that is only very short and they don't recognize it because it's so short and then the mind comes in again and says something about it or say I want or future or past whatever comes in so if you pay attention to naturally arising moments of pure awareness or presence it could happen when you wake up in the morning eyes open and you look around and stillness is there and some people experience that and it may last for half a minute or a minute and for many people then the mind suddenly starts to work the machinery of mind the wheels and before they know it they've gone into the state of being completely identified with thought and suddenly they remember what their problems are and what they have to do today and all those, oh and that oh my god, oh and then I have to oh on yesterday this happened suddenly of course it's the state of being identified with thought is a problematic state and very heavy so if you can catch that time when thoughtless awareness is there naturally and when you pay attention to it it stays for longer just be aware of it because it is the awareness and nature is beautiful when you go into nature you can only really see it when the mind is still then you truly see you truly perceive may not, perhaps not necessarily totally still but you can at least some of the time you can truly be there and listen and see and smell what is and not label it and then imagine what that does to relations with human beings when you can allow the other person just to be without the compulsion to label immediately allow them to be and to say and to do and again I use the word allow and that's a key word that takes you as a little pointer that takes you into that state of presence allow what is to be and what is is always this moment and anybody who listens to me now will be able to do that they would no longer be listening by now if they were not something that they recognize as the truth so anybody who listens to this is able to allow this moment to be not continuously and the beautiful thing is it doesn't have to be continuous I'm not saying from now on you are going to be or try to be even worse try to be present and try hard to be present from now on for the rest of your life it's a new problem then fortunately that's not needed all that's needed is to allow this moment to be and that's not a lot it's just this moment and that's very strange because the normal human state is very different from being open completely with what is now and face it in that state of openness and in that state of alertness which is true intelligence a state of alertness which at first sight looks as if you didn't know much anymore but that is intelligence intelligence that is greater than thought then thought or action can come out of that state if it's needed and it'll be right for that moment it will be unpremeditated unrehearsed unprepared completely fresh, completely new and completely right the optimum response of that moment or nothing may happen no words may come no action may arise and then that will be the optimum response there are many situations in which nothing is needed except the simple act of surrender to what is there are many situations in which nothing can be done for now except the simple fact of realizing accepting that nothing can be done right now and so that is the beautiful state of surrender and that frees you from being dependent on and threatened by the world of form in other words, the world so one could say it frees you from the world, so to speak

not that you turn away from it in fact you can only become free of the world by facing it fully and openly we're not running away from anything so that state of allowing what is is the opposite of running away from or denying what is that in fact is the mind's usual way denying what is because I'm looking for something else not this, I'm looking for the next moment, don't give me this moment this, I don't want this I want that I'm running to the next moment, that's why I'm in such a hurry because I'm hoping to complete myself there I needed to complete myself, I'm not complete yet leave me alone so the wonderful thing then and we come back to your question with that comes the realization that you are complete already on a deepest level I realized, and that was part of that piece that I am already complete of course there are many things I could still achieve and I haven't yet achieved in this world hundreds of things that I could achieve and if one or two I may achieve and there are many things I could learn and add to my knowledge or my experiences, there are still things to be experienced on that level fine, but on a deepest level there is that sense of fullness and completion already in which you don't need anymore to add to who you are, you are already the fullness, life is your essence but that's not the life of form it's the life prior to form, the formless one life that you are is already complete in you and then you as form, yes, can still do things and experience things beautifully and truly enjoy because you don't need those things anymore to enhance your sense of self as long as you need all those things to enhance your sense of self, you may be trying to enjoy yourself but really there is a kind of desperation behind it, a neediness and a frustration you are never quite getting there because you are using the world to enhance your sense of self and it doesn't work so that's the beautiful thing the realization that in the now there is already the fullness of life as your very essence so that's the wonderful thing when you can just walk around nature or the city in that state of openness in which thought isn't that important anymore and here that's an interesting thing, for many people there is a transitional stage from being identified with thought completely to moving into the realm which is I sometimes call it the new step in human evolution is to rise above thought and for some people there is an intermediate stage one could almost say in which they realize that all thought is relative any judgment or interpretation is a perspective on something and you could easily move to a different standpoint from where you see the same thing from a different perspective then you might have another judgment about it so some people are beginning to recognize the relativity of all thought and so they are no longer completely identified with thought and thought loses its heaviness one could almost say they no longer totally believe in all the mental noise it's recognized as mental noise, it's recognized as mental positions and that's a wonderful thing when you can see that any statement the mind makes might be relatively true but quite often the opposite statement is also true if you could look at it, that's how you see in the world when people argue they identify with their mental positions and once you've identified with the mental position you're defending your sense of self so you argue with great sometimes violence or you might need to kill some people so that your sense of self can survive or feel stronger so to see the relativity of any judgment or any position yes, you don't have

to relinquish them, you can still have opinions but recognize them as mental positions and perspectives and not the truth so that is the intermediate stage you no longer take your thoughts all that seriously that implies of course that there's some presence from where you can allow those thoughts to be there without some presence and presence is the arising unconditioned consciousness the vast around beyond thought the fact that you're able not to take your mind too seriously means that realm presence is arising in you because if it were not you would still be totally trapped in mind and even the statement don't take your mind too seriously would be meaningless because you are your mind when you're totally identified it would be the unconscious state so to recognize thought as thought to recognize mental positions as mental positions you may still have them they may even still have a certain momentum, a certain energy and when words come out of your mouth and you're expressing your mental position you may feel the emotional momentum still behind it but hmm there it is I'm expressing a position you just see it and feel the energy that comes with that and so gradually there's the ability more and more to see and allow the mind and it is no longer that serious and the mind may play its own tricks and you then recognize repetitive patterns that tell you something about yourself perhaps you're not good enough or you should or why didn't and what if or whatever the patterns are and they go on and on self-talk dialogues in the head monologues repetitive at night you wake up and it goes on and on and the emotions that accompany that and fuel that very mind activity and the mind activity adding more fuel to the vicious circle between emotions and mind activity and you see it and you suddenly see it and that seeing is presence arising and that seeing is also the field of stillness arising there may be turbulence but when you can see turbulence as turbulence there is a stillness arising that is the seeing it as turbulence and so that's happening and through simply even listening to these words which are simply spoken from that state one could almost say when you listen to these words you're listening to yourself they're coming out of you really and even that can be very helpful there's an energy that is in the words because they come out of presence and anything that comes out of presence has still the flavor one could say of presence to it a certain energy is there and that awakens your own presence so to speak that draws it out and that's the power of spiritual discourse which goes beyond the usual usage of words which are simply to convey information and here the words are yes to convey information but more also to reach a deeper level in yourself that is beyond the conceptualizing mind and when it retouches that, the unconditioned consciousness, it responds and that is sometimes the exhilaration or the enormously satisfying feeling that you get when you listen to spiritual truth it can also happen when you read a book that comes, that is written from presence, there's still an energy field there one could say and the moment you read oh yes, yes I know that spiritual truth never needs convincing you don't need to convince anybody, persuade anybody that this is true and the beautiful thing of course it requires no belief all belief is mind stuff

[Speaker 2] (1:49:20 - 1:49:33)

so this 80% reduction in your thinking mind did it occur to you that maybe you'd gone insane or something

[Speaker 1] (1:49:33 - 1:56:42)

well not so much to me but to people around me that's right so people who knew me especially family parents, family members some friends thought something had gone wrong with me because well after the shift for a while I carried on with the external structures of my life I just carried on as if nothing had happened because they still had a certain momentum and there was just the momentum was there and I went with the momentum for 3 years or so 4 years and then realized that those external structures were totally out of alignment with my inner being I was in the academic world mind dominated completely and ego dominated completely and so then a moment came when I left it all behind and that's when people thought I was really mad because to leave a promising academic career behind and go into nothing and then sit on the park bench and not do anything anymore it was quite extreme because I didn't have any spiritual guidance nobody who told me that well you don't need to live on a park bench you can actually still function in the world I had to find that out for myself and that took quite a few more years that I could still function in the world but for a while the state of presence or beingness was so satisfying and beautiful and complete I lost all interest in future let alone ambition or needing to achieve this or that if the present moment is so fulfilling why need the future now of course on a practical level future still operates and it's quite helpful sometimes to know that you need to catch a plane in a few days or something like that or even to learn something that you need a certain amount of time to learn the language or whatever it is but I didn't need future internally anymore and it took years before I started being able to deal with the world again without needing the world almost in a playful way to initiate things, to do things and miraculously quite a few things came to me even when I was sitting on the park bench and not interested and often very close to having nothing in my pocket and usually at the last minute somebody or something came and again there would be enough to live for a while, to live on miraculously, it always happened and gradually then I was able to function in the world again I must say a few, two or three times I tried to drop back into the structures of the world I was feeling that my time on the park bench was coming to an end and I thought, okay, I better do something and then I once I applied for a job and this is quite funny I applied for a job at a merchant bank in the city of London and they actually, I actually got an interview and they listened to me with interest but didn't offer me a job and then I applied for an academic job and I also got an interview and I talked a bit about teaching and I must have said something that what really matters is I try to avoid spiritual language but the truth or that which is beyond and there was a panel of professors interviewing me maybe six or seven and at the end of the interview one of the professors asked me, and what do you really want to do? He could see that that was not what I really wanted to do and that was my last interview ever so I realized I really didn't

want to drop back into the structures of the world and then gradually people came and asked questions sometimes and out of informal teaching situations then something a little bit more structured informal came and so then I became a spiritual teacher in the eyes of the world so that's how it happened and a while ago somebody asked me what is your greatest achievement in life and I couldn't think of very much but what suddenly came to me was well, I don't need to think that's why I couldn't think of it but I don't need to think anymore unless I want to think that's my achievement but that's not really an achievement because it's a negative thing, it's a non I don't need to think so I haven't achieved really anything and I wouldn't get a job if I put that in my resume I don't need to think anymore but really that's what it is the very power of the teaching comes from that state of awareness it's not me, I always, whenever I start a talk I have this feeling I've got absolutely nothing to say, there's nothing there so it's not really this person that is doing anything the whole teaching and is having quite an impact on the world but it is the state of no thought that comes out of that nothing to do with this person

[Speaker 2] (1:56:44 - 1:56:54)

so even though people from the outside might have thought that you were a little loony your internal experience you never questioned what had happened

[Speaker 1] (1:56:54 - 1:57:41)

no, no it was so clear and there was never any question the reality of it was so obvious and I once said somewhere that even if I had met the Buddha and the Buddha said oh no, that's not it, I would have said oh, so even the Buddha can be wrong, that's interesting and that's not spoken from ego it was just to say that how immediate and obvious the reality is that no mental thing or anything anybody says could question, it's like holding something in your hand and there's an apple and somebody comes and says no, that's not an apple, but you know it is

[Speaker 2] (1:57:43 - 1:58:03)

Now you talked about the change in the discursive mind reduction of 80%, I'm so glad you gave me a number, I really appreciate that I'm curious though about your physical body and how that changed or not, and how you experience your physical body now

[Speaker 1] (1:58:04 - 2:06:45)

yes well, my physical body is not strong and some people think I must be quite weak because my body looks a bit fragile, but there's actually quite a lot of energy in it, not continuously there are fluctuations of energy I haven't been really ill since then, I had flu I think it was last year for the first time in many many many years, I couldn't even remember when I last had a flu I'm not saying that necessarily physical health is always associated with spiritual realisation it is not but I very much sense the aliveness in my

body a lot of the time because part of the sense of presence is that you're feeling that every cell is alive the centre of your attention is not in the head, it's diffused all over the body so as I sit here I can sense that there's an aliveness in the cells of the body subtle but it's there and so the moment you feel that you're alive and so you inhabit the body and then that becomes part of the state of presence because you're present with every cell of the body and then you look around it's a beautiful way of not being drawn back into mind when you dwell in your body and then you perceive still feeling the inner body and this is how I, this very moment it is for me my attention isn't completely in the words a lot of my attention is in the energy field of the body as I speak and that's part of that beautiful stillness and then you look around and even as you look at something or listen to something you still feel the aliveness and then whatever you look at or listen to, your sense perceptions you realize the world also is very much alive everything has aliveness to it not just what we call living things even so called inanimate objects have beingness of presence and of course every physicist would agree and they say that of course if you examined the atomic structure even of a stone you would see it's very much alive just like the body to only very small differences and so when you perceive through the screen of mind everything becomes dead for many people that's how they experience the world lifeless through no longer able to perceive because of the screen of mind and then suddenly you realize everything is alive and so that's wonderful and so that's the main thing concerning my body is that I sense it a lot of the time it's there, I know it's there occasionally when I sometimes tell people when you feel an illness coming on go more deeply into the body be there and hold that state of being, inhabiting the body and lie in that, sit or lie somewhere and be completely in here, in the body and hold it for 10 minutes, 15 minutes, whatever and that is so much aliveness suddenly that often the first signs of that illness suddenly is gone it works if you catch it when you sense the first signs of something not quite right somewhere in the body and then become very present you turn up the light of presence now for some people that happens because they are threatened by a crisis in their lives, maybe your very survival is threatened and then they become they could of course go into despair, it's the opposite or they step into presence there's always another aspect to the dreadful events that we witnessed this week in New York I'm saying this although perhaps some people will get angry with me when I say it when people face death, many people in the last moments realize the truth of who they are, they separate from the mind made self and there's a sudden realization and if that happened, and I'm sure it happened to quite a few people, many people there, then your life was worthwhile the flowering, even if it takes a few seconds, it's there I spoke to a man, I was staying in a cabin in the mountains a few weeks ago and there was a big lake there and this man had in the winter taken his kayak out and paddled in the lake and suddenly a gust of wind came and the kayak capsized and freezing lake and it took him half an hour to swim to the shore in the freezing water and he didn't know whether he would make it and he said that a shift happened while it was suddenly he could see himself there in the water there was a disassociation from the me and pure consciousness was there watching and he survived but this can happen when

your life is threatened and suddenly there it is and many people have reported that in near death experiences, people who were very close to death came back or actually died in most cases the realization that on a deeper level all is well they suddenly saw from a deeper level that what was a tragedy what was a disaster and dreadful from a conventional perspective when they left they stepped out of their form identity identification with form which was being dissolving or threatened suddenly they realized it's fine all is well and also they realized there is no death beyond belief a live realization and so in any disaster this happens to people this realization and so you can read many accounts people who survived and many of them experienced that the beauty of spiritual transformation is that you don't need to wait for disaster or for death to happen that it actually can happen now what you die to now this moment is a mind made sense of self identification with thought and thought structures that is the me the me with it's story and it's needs and it's problems and it's conflicts you step out of it that's the true death

[Speaker 2] (2:06:47 - 2:07:07)

so Eckhart when I asked you about how you experienced your body now you described it as some very felt vibratory field that you are in touch with quite a bit of the time do you imagine that when you die what will occur to that field what will be your experience then

[Speaker 1] (2:07:09 - 2:11:48)

well in a way I feel that I have already died there is still the physical body and so that's what's left there is simply that the physical the density of the physical form dissolves and what is left is simply consciousness temporarily perhaps it will still have not a physical form but exists as a separate form unless you know that they say you can you can choose to reincarnate not compulsively take on another body but the choice may be there of taking on another body or of removing yourself completely I don't know what will happen I don't give much thought to the future so it does feel true to me that the choice is there not the compulsion of needing further sense experience that's gone long ago I can enjoy sense experience I can eat chocolate or whatever any kind of sense experience I enjoy it but if you said any of these things you can't have any more of this even sex no more for the rest of your life it wouldn't matter very much or no more chocolate it doesn't matter very much although I can enjoy it there's no compulsion anymore to experience whether sensory or other kinds of experience and so that need to live again in form, the desperate need is not there and there are many people now who are going beyond those who are ripe for realisation if you sense within yourself you will feel whether or not you want to live again you can already you want another physical existence do you need another physical existence and if you sense within you will know the answer perhaps at the moment you may still feel that you need another maybe in a few years you will feel that you don't want to have another physical existence and then it may be up to you whether or not in Buddhism they have the beautiful view that when

you are free you can choose perhaps out of compassion to go through another incarnation and then if you do you have to go through another cycle of ignorance but fairly quickly the whole cycle of ignorance that humans is the destiny of humans has been for a long time you would have to reincarnate into that again but you would move through fairly quickly imagine living your whole life again not a nice prospect having to live through it all again but I usually don't speculate or even envisage what's going to happen not even tomorrow because I feel that my life is an unfolding consciousness unfolding and it does what it wants I'm not making any plans for it I occasionally make plans on a personal level travel plans but not beyond there's a nice story of the disciple asking the Zen master what happens after death master? and the master says I don't know and the disciple says well, aren't you a master?

and the master says yes, but I'm not a dead one laughter it's just not interested I have really no interest in future it's strange

[Speaker 2] (2:11:53 - 2:12:26)

Eckhart, I'm imagining someone whose entire family was devastated somehow in the terrorist tragedies that happened today and I'm imagining that person listening to what you're saying and perhaps at one level not connecting with it because they might feel so emotionally overwhelmed by a sense of loss so my question would be how do you address that person? someone who's immediately suffering from a grief or a tragedy

[Speaker 1] (2:12:27 - 2:13:47)

so there's great pain there will not be the possibility probably on the external level to accept that for most people it will be impossible to accept on an external level although I speak of the yes to what is there are extreme cases of loss disaster or pain when it seems impossible to say yes to what is and so when the yes is not there pain is there great suffering is there and the suffering you can feel the suffering in the very cells of the body and the first step is actually to feel it in the cells of the body not to deny it but to feel that the enormous suffering which is human suffering millions of humans have experienced, millions, millions at all times have experienced disasters of that kind

[Speaker 3] (2:13:50 - 2:13:51)

if you believe in

[Speaker 1] (2:13:52 - 2:21:43)

reincarnation and I'm not advocating either belief or non-belief because what you believe doesn't matter it doesn't contribute anything to the transformation of consciousness it's not dependent on belief or disbelief in any idea if you believe in reincarnation then every human has already gone many times through that intensity of suffering if you don't believe in reincarnation you can say millions of humans have already gone through that

because there's so much suffering it's a human condition and some humans encounter very acute suffering this is human suffering and it's right here now when you feel it it is an opportunity to accept the suffering to say yes to what you feel not so much making it into mental stories, to feel it directly to feel the feeling of suffering and to cry if necessary tears will come anyway and suffering will come in waves it will go away for a while and a couple of hours later there will be another wave of intense suffering whether you believe it or not intense suffering of this kind is an enormous opening into spiritual realm in the deepest sense and allow it to be there allow the suffering to be there even, I've been talking about Buddhism, now I'm talking about Christianity the image of surrender to suffering is the image of Jesus on the cross and this applies whether you see yourself as a Christian or not it's an archetypal deep image that contains an enormous truth that perhaps people were not, for a long long time not able to hear consciously it could only be conveyed to them through that image and that image of Jesus on the cross we are used to the image you may like it or dislike it, it doesn't matter but if you came to that image of Jesus on the cross without any preconceived ideas you're coming from another planet and you see suddenly people worship this strange image of a man on the cross and you would say, what is that?

why do they worship this person who seems so completely helpless and see it's strange if you come to that with a completely open state you will see that it is an image of complete surrender to suffering and of course also in the story of the crucifixion it's there as the last resistance of Jesus and these are all archetypal images archetypal teachings the last resistance was, God why has thou forsaken me Jesus says on the cross the last arising of resistance and suffering and the next statement after that is not my will but thy will be done and that applies even if you have no belief in a personal God, that is simply pointing to the state of complete surrender to what is the pain allow it to be there you don't need to address a God if you don't believe in a God simply allow it what else can you do there is nothing you can do nothing of course you could train and start fighting them or go and become a terrorist in their country or it would be more deep unconsciousness but truly there is nothing you can do and to see that there is nothing you can do except allow this pain to be there and then I am not telling you or making any promise of what happens when you do that you will have to see for yourself what that allowing, what that surrender does that complete yes and people have done it those who became teachers, the early teachers somehow perhaps through similar events it happened to them, life did it to them dreadful, totally unacceptable disaster happened to them everything was removed from them and the pain became so unbearable that of course yes they could have committed suicide but really a suicide is a deep no still it's an asserting of oneself against the world but instead the suffering became so unbearable that they let go of the no and even explanations in the head you can't explain it really in the head, why, why, why people ask and the surrender only comes when you let go even of seeking an answer to why you don't know it's not possible to know, so not even to seek an answer and that is part of surrender because in complete spiritual surrender you

embrace also the state of not knowing accepting that there is deep pain and you have no answer, that's how it is you just don't know and suddenly there's an openness suddenly there's some space around the pain and the rest happens that's all really that is needed, I don't want to put ideas into your head and tell you what happens, except to say that you will find some spaciousness in the midst of pain and there have been people in concentration camps similar totally unacceptable situations that continuous intense suffering, not knowing whether they would survive another hour, another day every moment could be the last and suddenly a complete yes and suddenly they have reported a few to whom it happened a great sense of deep peace in the midst of hell peace in the midst of hell that is the deepest teaching of the image of Christ on the cross because ultimately every human is Christ on the cross

[Speaker 2] (2:21:49 - 2:22:11)

and just a couple more questions Eckhart I've heard you a couple times quote Ramana Maharshi the great sage of India how do we measure spiritual progress and you attribute to him the saying that we measure spiritual progress by the absence of thought do you really believe that?

[Speaker 1] (2:22:13 - 2:26:34)

yes the degree of absence of thought yes yes, that's right so it's simple very simple now the mind might say ok, that means I haven't made any progress because I'm still thinking all the time well perhaps that's not true perhaps you don't know that there's already absence of thought in you, maybe brief that doesn't matter do you ever see beauty, respond to beauty there must be absence of thought in you because you wouldn't even see beauty otherwise that moment is absence of thought there may be many moments when there's absence of thought and then suddenly you become aware that there are times when thought is absent now of course then, very often the mind will come in and say oh, I'm not thinking because then you're thinking again but after a while you can actually feel that you know you're not thinking and still not thinking but it's good not to try to bring about that state because that could lead to more struggle and effort the quickest way to becoming free of thought is to surrender to this moment, to accept this moment as it is because if you observe the compulsive thought processes you find they're all associated with non-acceptance the non-acceptance is an essential characteristic of the mind made the egoic state non-acceptance of what is and all the compulsion really is a running away from the denial of the beauty and aliveness of now so when you see the truth of that and you can accept this moment as it is that's a state of great power, not weakness as the mind may tell you accept this moment as it is as a side effect of this acceptance, the mind slows down because when you're no longer fighting what is the compulsion to think subsides and that's something that can be continuous spiritual practice, many times you won't accept what is and then you will realize you're again denying the now and that realization means okay, you're present

again when you see the non-acceptance you're already free of the non-acceptance only when you don't see the non-acceptance then you're again trapped in all the mental noise that is not accepting what is so the most powerful spiritual practice is accepting this moment as it is uncompromising acceptance of this moment as it is that's why the Zen Masters sometimes look so fierce, although they are gentle inside really when you see the pictures old pictures of Zen Masters drawings, fierce eyes it's the uncompromising oneness yes, this not moving, it's open and that state is both gentle and fierce, it's both at the same time and so that is the most powerful spiritual practice and it's really the only spiritual practice that doesn't give you time there's so many spiritual practices that give you time to become good at to practice more and more gradually but accepting this moment as it is you can only do it now yeah

[Speaker 2] (2:26:36 - 2:27:04)

and just finally Eckhart I'm curious if you can say a little bit more about this metaphor that you used the other day for humans such as yourself who have had a radical spiritual awakening you talked about them as flowers that have come forward and that in the past this was rare for humans to flower in this way but that you see it happening more and more why the image of a flower?

[Speaker 1] (2:27:05 - 2:34:33)

yes, the image of a flower that came to me when a few years ago I was talking to a friend who was his special field was the evolution of the planet he studied that and we talked about the evolution of life on the planet and he said that I was surprised when he told me that plant life existed on the planet for millions of years before there were ever any flowers so and then when he told me that I was very surprised and I had this image of the sun rising one day millions of years ago and suddenly the first flower opening it's like a new dimension there's plant life and then plant life there's a new dimension, maybe it was a cactus or something and the cactus looks quite just boring, just a piece of green and suddenly comes this incredible thing out of an uninteresting looking plant comes this incredible beauty where did that come from? well it produced it, it came out of this this being produced it and so the first flower came and probably it could well have been thousands of years before another flower opened and then perhaps and so the first flower came out of an uninteresting looking plant comes this incredible beauty where did that come from?

for millions of years before there were ever any flowers so and then when he told me that I was very surprised and I had this image of the sun rising and a few years ago I was talking to a friend who was there, somebody flower popped up and then a few hundred years later perhaps around the Buddha a few flowers opened and but always a rare phenomenon that flowering that awakening spiritual awakening and now I feel it's for the first time we've now reached the point where an abundance of flowers are going to

appear and already appearing on the planet one reason being that they have to appear now because if there's no shift in consciousness and humankind carries on as before in the same state of consciousness another hundred years of this no change in technology and science just continuing medicine or continuing the same mind dominated way would mean the end probably the planet would not be able to sustain life for another hundred years of this human consciousness so if there's no shift now so it's the critical point now that we have reached is if there's no shift in consciousness then perhaps the species won't survive or fall back to a much earlier state of development and then perhaps try again if the planet is able to sustain life or it may not or the planet which has its own intelligence it's also this planetary intelligence the planet may decide to do away with humans to save itself nature could do that in many ways easily a body raises the temperature a few degrees to get rid of germs and the planet could do it in a similar way or more likely humanity in the old state of consciousness would self-destruct an increase in violence, madness wars and terrorism and so on so if the shift doesn't happen now then there's not much chance but I must admit I'm not totally sure that humanity will make it but I have a strong sense that the shift is happening and again there's also an acceleration of the old consciousness in its madness almost trying to assert itself again and so we may be seeing more of that in the near future an intensification of the madness that we've seen past century and other centuries, particularly of course the 20th century because the 20th century in the 20th century the madness of the human mind was magnified by, for the first time by science and technology and we could really see it so I do sense something new is arising and whether or not or to what extent the old will only go through destructive violence or whether the old structures are going to dissolve in a different less violent way, I don't know it depends probably on the number of humans who are open now to transformation because something is pushing forward to speak and in those humans who are open it can happen quite gently in those who are closed it can bring about disaster in order to produce the opening but still the sickness of the human mind if one could call it that is very visible at this time the illness collective illness so it's up to you to allow the new consciousness to come in allow it to come don't need to make it happen allow this moment to be it seems too simple but that's how it works

[Speaker 2] (2:34:53 - 2:36:08)

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for listening.